

# COMMON COLD

Arizona Department of Corrections  
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program  
HEP 1026 - Revised 08/08

## What is the common cold?

The common cold is an infection of the head and chest, caused by a virus. It can affect your nose, throat, sinuses, ears, and voice box.

## How does it occur?

The virus is transmitted from person to person by *direct* physical contact (or by touching your face after direct contact), or by *indirect* contact (such as sharing food, drinks, cigarettes, or utensils). Also, by infected droplets that are in the air from sneezing and coughing and are breathed in. Colds are not caused by cold weather or fatigue.

## What are the signs of a cold?



It starts with a sore throat, some weakness, congestion, and scratchy eyes. Sneezing, runny nose, headache, chills, and a mild fever may follow. These symptoms may last up to 10 days. It is normally not necessary to stop working.

## How should I treat a cold?

You can usually take care of yourself without needing to see your nurse or doctor.

- **Stop smoking while ill**
- **Drink plenty of fluids**
- **Rest**
- **Gentle face massage to relieve nasal decongestion**
- **Hot shower or warm face cloth on forehead may loosen head congestion**

For a runny nose take antihistamines; for sore throat use cough drops or gargle with warm salt water; for coughing and congestion take a cough syrup; for headaches, fever and aching take aspirin, generic Tylenol or ibuprofen. These items are available in the inmate store. Do not take more than the recommended doses of these medications.

**Do not take antibiotics for a cold.**

**NOTE:** You should submit an H.N.R. if:

- 1) You experience a high fever not relieved by aspirin, Tylenol or ibuprofen.
- 2) You have a persistent severe sore throat or your throat has white or grey spots.
- 3) You have difficulty breathing or chest pain.
- 4) You have a temperature of 101 or higher that lasts more than two days.
- 5) Cold symptoms last longer than 10-14 days.
- 6) Cough up thick, green or bloody sputum.

## How can I prevent catching a cold?



Do not share food, drinks, cigarettes, or drinking/eating utensils. Keep hands away from your face. Avoid close contact with others who are infected. To avoid passing the virus to others: Cover your mouth and nose (preferably with a tissue) when you cough or sneeze, then wash your hands.